WordEater

Wordeater XXIV STAFF

Loudmouth McKraken, editor-in-chief

Nancy Aydlett	Mitzi Edwards
John Greene	Brian Mahalik
Alice Pocious	John Stobart

The deadline for submitting manuscripts for Wordeater XXV is October 14. Submit all manuscripts, preferably typed, to J. Stobart in C1069. Manuscripts will not be returned. Cover designs should be no larger than 7½ inches by 13 inches and must include Wordeater xxv somehow. The two winning designs will each receive a $10. prize.

THE NEW STAFF WILL BE:

Eric Alander
Nancy Aydlett
Molly Burns
John Greene
Mitzi Edwards
Nancy Lockhart
Alice Pocious
John Stobart

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Fifty dollars in prizes will be awarded (twenty-five dollars for poetry, twenty-five for prose) if John Stobart believes any entries deserve prizes from those printed in Wordeater XXV.

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Nancy Lockhart

PAVEMENT GIFTS

Pavement gifts in city corners,
Bare and blatant in summer's sun,
Reek
To make us turn away.

Empty with its broken neck shattered green
In spilled-out wine,
The bottle rests wasted, like the lives
Of those who sleep here.

Slick pools, spumescent,
Ropy mucilage, issued from toothless mouths
(Never tasting penicillin)
Seep into cracks, breaking the backs of mothers
Long since dead.

Amidst oily rainbows of gutter puddles
Float Baby Ruths left by mangey curs
For raisin' flies.

Tried-out Trojan circles-
Wrinkled proof of soldiers' sad soirees
In hidden hallways.

Spurned by dusty gusts and restless children,
What abandoned brown felt hat
Does not carry lonesome history
In the wind?

AWORKOFART

...characters
locked within narrow windows
peering at the same safe
boring bored
waiting for
the great
white
wash
the xerox smile
the hour farther
"who art"
in seven
swallowed by thy frame
hung
without a name
another
paint-by-numbers
...clown

C.O.D.

Step right up...
To the box with the neat little seat
And repeat what you always say
The same way:
Bless me Father...

Get it on...
With LaVonne for an hour
In a room filled with perfume
And some other guys' cigarette smoke.

You can recline...
In a supine position
For a fee
With a physician to listen
And answer all your questions
With his

RISE TO THEE - OCCASION

I had hoped the words
Which I write would
Ignite
Making you tremble
And shiver
A chill down your spine
A sensual line
To touch the essence
Of your being
But all that I'm seeing
Is a hard on

FOR BILL

Bill me
Fill me up with your knowing
How
Without my saying
Now
Fit around the sound
Of my heart
Will me to love you
As much as you love me
Kill me until
I die of the pain of
Intimacy
Bill me

Nancy Lockhart
(Haiku Poetry)

The smell of summer
Baked into flowered bed sheets
Blesses night time dreams

SUMMER SMELLS

Summer smells
Of city dust and melting tar,
Garbage baking in the sun,
Of garden earth, chlorine pools,
Of clothes drying on the line.

Summer smells
Of perspiration, lemonade
And smoldering charcoal fires,
Of Coppertone, Raid, and Off,
And the honeysuckle of August nights.

Summer smells
Of corn on the cob, air conditioning,
Sunday at the zoo,
Salty air, watermelon
Noxema on my back.

Yet, when it's time for him to leave
Again
Summer smells!

A GRADUATION GOODBYE TO MR. MUNSON
FROM YOUR SECRET ADMIRER

We had the best times together...in my mind
As I rode the bus to school and imagined
My reflection to be you
Inhaling the scent of the wind in my hair
As you whispered promises for the night
Hoping your wife would never find out.
I appreciated the fact that you appreciated
My mind as well as my beauty which you were keen
Enough to observe behind my glasses.
I'd sit in your classes pretending to pay attention
To History, wondering if you'd miss me
After the bell.
Your initials were all over my notebook
But I was carful to cover them when you came around.

When you chaperoned at the prom I was awfully jealous
To see that your wife was so pretty,
But it's okay now.
I sort of go steady with a boy
Who works at my father's store.
Before I close I just want to say
Thank you for being so Goddamn Sexy!

P.S. Please burn this. I've scratched a lot of
stuff about you out of my diary!

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH?

If
Jesus stayed alive
Until he was 95½
And only croaked
From being pooped,
Some folks'd feel
Duped
'Cause they're the kind
Who pay more attention
To the dyin'
Than

Dorothy Bretz

PLACEBOES

"Is there an Easter Bunny?"
Said my neighbor child to me.
"Oh, boy," I thought, "what a spot--
"Dear, I'm sorry, no there's not."

"What about the Tooth Fairy?"
Searching for reality.
"Is that my Dad and Mommy, too?"
"Yes, honey, you've found the clue."

Dad and Mom try to provide
Games behind which we can hide
The problem-filled world adults face;
Too soon the child gets in the race.

Teen-ager pursues the myth,
Prince and Cinderella kiss.
Gaily from the ball they drive
In Dad's brand new red Mark V.

The real world is the next in line.
Application forms take much time.
"What experience have you had?"
"None"--"my, my, that's just too bad."

Love and marriege come in view;
Children add the sweetest hue.
That begins the big charade,
Add Santa to the fun parade.

What a pity most don't know
God above who loves them so.
His Son died to make a way
For honest, true help each day.

Life spins faster by the year,
Soon our twilight hours are here.
Make-believe does not provide
Any way to stem the tide.

God alone a peace can give,
Enabling all to daily live
Fulfilled, joyous and content
Till our days are fully spent.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Men hurt and lonely
Cry out in despair.
God--if there's a God--
Where are you out there?

I do not comprehend
If you're merciful and kind
A hungry, crippled world
Seems no where on your mind.

Listen well, O modern man
Long ago I had a plan.
I made a strong and noble pair
Placed them in a garden fair.
Bounteous plenty--all the best
Conditioned by a single test.

(Question and Answer continued)

Dorothy Bretz

My will or theirs the simple choice
Satan came--smooth, tempting voice.
"You can be like God, you know.
Plot your course while here below.
He's withholding things you need;
Do your own thing--splendid creed."

"God is loving, gentle, kind
Ignore His justice, He won't mind!"
Doubt was placed, the two did fall,
Provided sorrow for you all.
Because of man's own foolish pride,
Earth's coursewas set toward suicide.

All nature out of balance thrown
The consequences are well known.
Poverty, famine, crime and war
Sin's ravages do roam near and far.
That's when you shake your puny fist
And question if I do exist.

Read my Word you'll understand
A termination I have planned.
My Son will sit upon world's throne
His iron-clad rule will then be shown.
Therell be no sorrow, crying then.
Man will bow, his knees will bend.

At present time the choice still free
If in subjection you would be.
I long to be your Saviour, Friend,
All comfort, love and solace lend.
I do not promise trouble-free life,
But inner peace midst earthly strife.

Francine Tolf

(Francine won the Sonnet Award for this first sonnet)

SONNET

In perfect balance, opposites contend
and struggle for supremacy in vain;
Thus Nature's trodden cycles have no end--
Her song is but an infinite refrain.
The moon and sun, the winds and stars and flowers
are trembling on a universal scale
that holds in balance all conflicting powers
though light and darkness struggle to prevail.
The symmetry in nature, then, relies
on forces in eternal opposition--
A symmetry both terrible and wise
to thrive upon such Janus-like condition.
For man is born and ruled in this domain
where life depends on death and joy on pain.

SONNET

So strange that men may find the deepest peace
  in beauty that can swallow and destroy;
In that whose very essence is caprice
  evoking anguish carelessly as joy.
For Nature is a master of disguise,
  bewitching in her mystery and her power;
And ever in her soothing beauty lies
  destruction dormant ready to devour.
The self-same force who guides with gentle care
  a folded leaf to flower snowy white
Can split the earth, can lash and rage and tear
  a moonless sky with veins of fire at night.
The very force that nurtures life and breath
are those whose whims bring sudden, violent death.

ALL LIVING THINGS

Summer's leaf green thickets led
to clustered oak leaves crimson red.
In transient glory they remained,
till, raked by wind and swept by rain,
they formed a soggy bed and meet,
the heel of restless creatures feet.
All things, in time, are claimed by earth
who, from them, mixes magic birth.
Through her, eternal spring is bred
and living things are fashioned from the dead.

BEAUREGARD

Upon returning from his nocturnal revelries,
Beauregard lumbers like a determined lion
  past table legs and door stops,
    and heads straight for the pantry,
oblivious to the retinue of smaller animals
  tumbling over and around him in their
ecstatic welcome of poodle yelps and licking tongues.
        A cat of few words.
  Supercool, a lady's man, but not too bright
and usually utterly amazed to find himself
  exactly where he is, as though
in trudging from the kitchen to the living room
he forgot any original intentions he might have had
    to carry out the sojourn.
Wonder lights up two huge moon eyes
  as he settles beneath the piano
    and begins his toilette or
  a semblence of one; he tries but
    finds it too tedious
        and goes to sleep.
And after much eating and much pampering
  and much combing of fur balls,
        into the back yard
  he is swallowed by darkness.
We do not inquire as to what tomcattery will follow;
  his days are spent with family
        but his nights are his own.

Cyndy Vangor

Sometimes,
When I am young,
Words flow like silk
Metaphors become exhalted
On the paper of my life
But alone I only ponder
And my thoughts do not exceed

Cyndy Vangor

The boundries of my private soul
A suppressed, anxious seed
Growing, yet remaining shy
Indide me - Just a dream

But someday I'll betray myself
I'll say the thought I hold
And others will be jealous or
Unable to save the dreams
They'll criticize and call them lies
Not wishing to be told
What they have long tried to forget -
Their dreams, their hope, these lies

But just as long as I can hold
These dreams so preciously untold
They connot ruin these lies, my faith
That they have lost and
I still own
I want to wake them from their sleep
I know they want to be as free
To dream again
Alive with passion, meaning

But afraid and ever cautious
I silently will glow
But only in my hidden world
So they will never know

Robin Boltz

SONNET

I found a friend of mine the other day,
A melancholic mood had taken hold;
His sanguine expectations held at bay,
Your dreams will come to naught, he had been told.
So woebegone, so sad a sight was he
I could not bear to see him in such a state.
Dear friend, said I, why can't I make you see
That they are fools for whom no god awaits?
Recondite images surfaced in his eyes--
He dared to dream again, and I was glad
My truth was stronger than the callous lies
Of twisted men who surely must be mad.
For life is death without a dream, my friend--
A paradise of fools when fancies end.

Gary Magruder

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

Tristan and Isolde never knew what love's about
It was a magic potion that made their passion start,
That sparked the flame, then fed the fire, filling their lives with doubt.
With soaring song they swore they'd never be apart
Nor be untrue. Their love was lightning and the stormy sphere,
A passion blazing in the night, an ardor known by few;
And yet one knows that given time, it would not last the year,
That such a fire would foil the test of days. They never knew
It's not the thunderstorm that feeds the earth and fills the sea,
but rather the gentle rain and morning mist that set life free.

Gary Magruder

SWEET DEATH

To have the peace of leaves asleep
Beneath the fallen snow,
Unaware of cold or wind, or any
Bitter moment...
Unfeeling, but
Unhurt.

SNOWFALL

Glistening in the morning light
A sugar-coated fantasy stands
Dredged with grains of powder-white
So sweet to sight
Our vision aches with longing
And yet, if satisfied
Our sight will surely pain us
So wrapped in beauty is the earth,
A confection too sweet for all but
Compulsive viewers.
Such indulgence
Is not for long
Even for those who dare to look their fill of
Winter's white dessert
For cutting through this vision of delight
Men of convenience will send
As if to save our sight
The cinder trucks.

EPITAPH TO A WINTER LOVE

I will remember you as
A pale cold image
Reflected upon
The mind's calm pool,
Frozen for a season
And then,
Set free by sunlight,
Blurred at first,
Then obliterated by the
Raindrops of spring.
Soon even the memory will go,
Evaporate in the heat of summer.
Only this scribbling will remain
To speak of
Forgotten seasons,
If it too is not
Discarded in a casual
Autumn cleaning.

Molly Burns

I need to find an ocean
    to sit down beside me
To tell me its stories
    and sing me its songs.
Hear the laughter of the wind
As it sails upon the waves
And walk along
    its pebbled sands.

Molly Burns

I've always been strong
always had pride
The sadness I've felt
always had to hide
But I'm emerging from my shell
into a world of delusions
The aspect of which
is becoming illusions
And my smile is widening
brightening my eyes
The laughter is coming
out of its disguise
So watch out world
I'm ready to land
I've put down my armor
and extended my hand.

****

Time is but an endless calendar
of blurred emotions.
Drought and rain
seldom note change.
We mellow away the even hours
and toast to the odd.
Lying together
noticing only the sun
rising
then setting just as quickly.
Days pass
and we remain the same.
Untouched by the confusion
lacking the monotony.
Knowing only
the remainders of spring.

****

The man punched out the ticket
as I waited and I stared,
His pocket watch said half past noon
his silver badge just glared.

The woman pushed her shopping cart
down the crowded aisles,
Grabbing slabs of animals
slain over many miles.

The boy sits in his football jersey
Algebra book in hand,
Studying for mid-terms
at his parents demand.

So where do I fit in?
And where is your cue?
How'd it ever happen
to come to me and you?

Refusing to close our eyes
to the production of the system,
People bare their asses
while we refuse to kiss them.

Earl Anderson

TIME'S HUNGER

Chews iron, bites steel;
Grinds stone into earthen meal;
Makes cities into ghost towns;
and beats all mountains down;
Bees, beasts, rocks, flowers;
To the end-time devours.

DREAM

Down sleep's dark stream you go
Back to memories you once did know:
Leave the halls in which you sleep,
Leave them now in slumber deep,
Return to times that now seem dim
Stooped in shadow dark and grim:
Sail beyond the tops of trees
Out along a whispering breeze,
Past marshes, hollow reeds,
Past fields of waving weeds,
Through mists that riseth white
Up from here dream tonight:
Rise and follow stars that leap
Up through heavens cold and steep;
Seek sunlight and the day
Back to pasture's of child's play,
Down sleep's dark stream you go
Back to memories you once did know.

Doug Emory

WINDOW

I press my fingertips
Against the glass
That shows no color,
Saves the dark.

It trembles gently in the wind
The way you trembled
The first night we touched
Heaven and hell
With our bodies.

ANOTHER TIME, YES

Another time, yes. remembering the crow's cry in a wheat field in early spring, and later the mountain's shout, wildly crying out, and longing to be seen, then the coast and the subway and the cry of the night and your lost vision in my arms. Now another time, yes, I remember that well, before we fell prey to the storm.

RADICAL HISTORICAL BLUES

Time made fools of us all, caught us innocent, singing "Times they are a-changin'", not hinting that it never, we alone, changed, grown to manhood in leisure suits and the race for a rich man's honey--Time proved we were all such liars, spending our hate before porcelain idols, talking our love out on bar stools, keeping it cold and tough as stone below our leather belts--so ashamed of what we'd lost, of what mere children had dreamed of Khe Sahn Watts at Kent, knowing now so clear that the suckers who died thinking we backed them were just blessed fools whose clocks ran out before their dreams exploded.

Doug Emory

State Police Target Practice: 8 a.m.

And the faithful uphold "My country 'tis of thee" in west suburban Lockport, where the need to be quick and deadly on the draw manifests itself only in the minds of old men watching late movies, who sit quiet butpray for a gun themselves when the Duke hits the screen outmanned or hopelessly unarmed.

And I, less faithful, watch the dog run, stepping high through the frost-covered corn stalks, her head, her ears jerking up at each cold snapping wave of shots tearing through hearts and guts and minds of black human silhouettes, cutouts of everyman, while she never stops searching and the crows never stop scattering, leaving me alone not amazed each time the sun glints off those again-raised points of steel and the men in blue suddenly pull the trigger.

SOUVENIRS

Because memories were fragile
She kept souvenirs:
Three shells from a Virginia beach,
A stuffed panda from a Chicago circus,
A plastic landscape with flying snow--
"Santa greets you from scenic Vermont"
And a bible from a New York hotel.

At night sometimes outside her room
Fires burned over factory towers.
Smoke hung and moved like gauze in the wind,
Then vanished.

BROWNSTONE APARTMENT 302

Brownstone apartment 302
Where one light threw shadows on dying plaster--
Where you went straight, played holy housewife,
Washed our dishes in a losing cause,
Tried to bribe our pipe-dreams with a home-cooked meal--
You filled that building like the wind.
And down, in the street, in the dark,
I dealt psychedelic post cards to tourists,
Laughed, thinking "Young White Punks on Dope'
Till that carrer went sour,
Till neither of us had a dime.
And then I sold blood,
Twice a month,
To plastic bags--
"Brother, can't stick you with your sleeve down," he'd said,
That first time--
And the pay not bad but senselessly limited
For I no longer needed blood to fuel spent passions
Or desires so childish that God
Had no need to honor them
Or even
Look.

NORFOLK BLUES

You can see a lot of yourself in a paper bag blowing down an unknown road in the city's dusty brown dusk, especially if you've been unfortunate enough to fall from the hallowed graces of the white middle class as some few of us have. And that's the case, so you keep walking, and the strains of

Doug Emory

"Mr. Tambourine Man" echo through your brain, but they really don't apply because there is nothing, nothing at all but a "blanker whiteness/ With no expression, nothing to express", and the rustling, dragging sound of the bag and the roar of the automobiles that rush the bag down the concrete and blow your hair in your eyes with the breeze they raise in their passing. Yes, you're all alone in the haze of the city where off the main drag back in tenements wait the pimps and their whores and the pharmacists with their eight-hour escapes that you'll learn to fall to when you've grown wise--no longer the boy-prince you are today with his saintly notions and longings for the touch of warmer bodies that he really doesn't remember. But we all pretend like that when we're lost, don't we? We all have our forgotten bodies that now seem so warm and our prostitutes with their hearts of gold and our sweet young country girls with their poetic cravings and the towers of Babel we all erect between ourselves and our reality. And when the bag gets caught straight on by a car and you hear it explode you're shocked and your belly aches again and you suddenly wish you had a new needle fullof dreams to shoot and replace the strength the night's so greedily stealing out of your soul.

Sharon Willhoite

CHILD'S MESSAGE

Show me how
the world comes
alive

Point out the sights to see

Let me feel the wind
in my mind

Give me the feeling of
free

BOOBY TRAP

"Oh yes!" she whispered
across the breeze of breathless desire

"Of course!" she decided
shyly spilling her silken lotion
through his mind

"When?" he demanded
as his architectural development dream
began to rise into the sunset skyline
over her waves

"How much?" he thought
as she scratched the itch
he couldn't reach

"You will do what I will!" she teased
as she picked deeply into
the pocket of his strength

"Ownership" they promised
each other's embrace
as they dreamed of that
delicate danger zone called love...

Richard Merrill

A NEW ROCK 'N' ROLL

Punk, funk,
Disco-dance
Are on the "immortal" top ten.
Paints and gimmicks,
Glitter-prance.
When will it ever end?

Isn't it time
For a new rock 'n' roll?

Oldies, newies,
Present and past,
And everything in between.
Holy shit!
How long will it last?
When will music be "clean"?

Isn't it time
For a new rock 'n' roll?

Isn't it neat?
Movie-star "meat"
Hitting the A.M. waves?
Insipid lyrics,
Simple beat,
Gathering teen-age raves.

Isn't it time
For a new rock 'n' roll?

Pseudo-singers and
Pseudo-writers,
Dumb DJ's and everything crass
This plastic, synthetic
"Music" world:
Let's not kiss it's ass!

Isn't it time
For a new rock 'n' roll?

Ann Stiles

ANOTHER SORROW

I did't understand
then, why you were
there,
or even the reason
for asking your
name.

If I had not asked
who you were that
day,
my life would have
gone on the
same.

But I did.

Your tender smile
was like golden
summer sunshine.

But it wasn't
for me.

Mitzie Edwards

RELEASE

Cadaverous limbs, grotesquely gaunt,
Knarled with age, with pain drawn taut.
Eyes mutely scream a message clear,
A prayer that God must surely hear.

Helplessly I held his hand
And watched the soul of man
Struggle to shed the worn-out shell,
And seek release from earth-bound bell.

Then...peace and joy suffuse the face
With light of purest delight,
As soul of man and God embrace
On this dark somber night.

Sarah Swienton

NATURE SPENT

I could not still the wind,
and so I listened to her sounds.
She whispered soft and self-assured
a symphony in rounds.

I watched disturbed nature
gather seeds of discontent.
Undusted dandelions
in toe-touching spasms, bent.
Writhing leaves, just barely brown
ended maiden flights
upside-down on balding ground
plucked from higher heights.

Fine and fetching fingers
called the earth unto herself
And nature, wrapped in winter's shroud
withered on the shelf.

ONE NIGHT LIGHT

A clever candle casts its light
exposing musty air in flight,
And shadows stir within its sight
dancing a night-time ballet rite.

C. Myers

THE VICTORIAN

She was the last of the
Victorian ladies,
Though she didn't know it.
She watched the moon at eventide,
And pressed pale petals
In tissue paper, as if that were
The thing to do.
She acted, as if by instinct,
A gentle spider with a lacework web,
Delicately wrapping it about her men
She would begin: entrancing them
With her revelations
And her prophesy,

C. Myers

Blinding them with her moonlike eyes
Drowning them with tears and adoration
And lace on rounded breasts,
Until their strength had ebbed
And they were weakened,
Life sucked out with esoteric skill.
Then she buried them
In the cool damp graveyard of her mind
Their memory floating free as mist
Enveloping the petals pressed
With sick-sweet flower smells
Between the pages of her book.

LARK

You are a bearer of false tidings,
Presenting them to me
As if on a silver salver, softly
Garnished with your phrases,
Honey-liquid like your laughter
To my ears.
I see beneath your words
But I drink them anyway,
Intoxication rising in a flood
Into my memory.
I forget to disbelieve you
Though I should.

Mike Chlebanowski

FOR GRANDFATHER

Is life for you, old man,
a pine-sol scented room?
With greeting card decor
and painted pastel gloom.
How does it feel, when
the air is filled with
the smell of urine,
with cackling day and night,
from a crazy, torn apart woman?
No need for hope,
no need for dreams.
The world has picked your death-bed.
But, until that day,
you smell the stench,
you make those cries,
and die a little each day.

OLD HENRY

Ol' Henry was a plumber
with a doctrite from Purdue,
and people kept his number
cause' he knew just what to do.

He'd never accept no money
for the jobs he'd undertake.
Just finish all his plumbing,
and leave with a quick handshake.

He soon went down in history,
near miracles he'd perform.
With pipes and copper tubing,
creating brand new forms.

Mike Chlebanowski

Alas, one day in summer
Mrs. Preston was in need
for the one and only plumber
who could undertake her deed.

She accidently dropped her
pet pirrahnna down the drain
and she knew she'd never see her
little fish again.

But Henry confidently now,
stuck his fingers down the sink
and followed by his body down
the gooseneck with a blink.

"Oh, pop up dear old Henry"
was everybodys' wish
but the only thing to pop up
was Mrs. Preston's fish.

PIMPLE BOOGIE

I got cheese on my burgers
I got grease on my fries
I know my baby likes me
by the look in her eyes.

She told me so this morning
She told me so last night
She tells me almost everytime
we've gone and had our fight.

My face is full of acne
My heart is full of woe
My mind just can't figure out
why my baby had to go.

Curt Cavnar

DECIDE

So far and few and inbetween
could it be that it's a dream
when it rains it pours.

Then your fighting gravity
why should you fight me,
lets make a rule to make no rules
Lord could you please save these fools
from their hypocricy .Is this philosophy?
Cause if it is, then I'm a genius
But let it never come between us
I'm no more wiser, just less foolish.

FORMULA I

The thing essential to good life is breathing
what others tell you may be deceiving
when people say that there is more
ask them what they're lying for.

Curt Cavnar

Love Song for a Lady

Frightening flashbulb flashbacks haunt the night
but lay back lady cause this time I'll take on the fight
caustic devilish flowers taunt and haunt and slap your face
from dark till dawn the time becomes a race

But whoa to this horse I'll grab him by the reins
I'll hold you, protect you, shield you from acid rains
Soft kisses on your forehead, Soft touches through your hair
I think I'd like to die for you to show you that I care.
I like to look at your sleeping face and if it's all the same
I think I'll fall in love with you in the short time that remains.

The following is a selection of the poems submitted for "The Loudmouth Special" Poetry Contest.

HAIKU

Haiku poetry is 3 lines, 5,7,5, "spoken" syllables respectively, dramatic imagery in a poem, usually about some small natural object, which makes a big universal point. An award of $5 was given to Nancy Lockhart for the following Haiku....

Feline fat and black
Your golden eyes tell stories
Neath the magic moon

The tip of the tongue
Of a sly wrinkled grey toad
Assasinates flies
(Nancy Lockhart)

Sleet seeding the earth;
Barren is the winter grain..
Unrequited love.
(Mitzie Edwards)

** TANKA**

Tanka is similar to Haiku but is 5 lines, 5,7,5,7,7,. An award of $5 was given to Mary McCallister for this poem....

Isaiah hurt when
Somebody plucked his whiskers
But was determined
And went on to dominate
The great age of prophecy.

CINGUAIN

Cinguain is 5 lines, 2,4,6,8,2 syllables. An award of $5 was given to Mary McCallister for this poem.....It is prefaced by a Haiku.

No shepherds, Bishops,
Although they think they are.
Go and ask the sheep.

If you
Think Bishops are
Good shepherds...think again
Or, better yet, go ask the sheep...
They know.

By faith
Was I taken
From the tomb of my life.
The stone rolled away and I was
Set free.
(M. McCallister)

The pain
Of being quite
Human is often eased
by peak experiences that
Happen.
(M. McCallister)

Jack Thatcher

A HIGH SCHOOL MEMORY

Johnny Baker was a large boy with green eyes, full sandy hair and a quiet disposition. He sat beside me in his "Win 76" football jersey and faded blue jeans. Mike, his best friend sat in front of him. Sometimes I think I went with Johnny to be near Mike. I hope not. Anyway, we were shooting the breeze in English class when Mike asked if we were going to the prom.

"I don't think so," Johnny mumbled.

"We're not?" I snapped.

"No MaryLou, I'll be busy."

"Johnny, too busy for Me?"

"Yeh, I'm sorry."

I was getting mad. We'd sort of understood that we'd go. Everyone would be there. Now I find out he doesn't have time for me. "Johnny, I want to go," I hissed under my breath.

Puzzled, he finally sighed his explanation. "They found my brother."

"Don't chang the subject."

"Sam's in an asylum. A ward for narcotics cases. I'm going to see him; I can't go to the prom. I'm sorry.

"Look, John, it isn't my fault your brother's a junkie. I want to go to the prom and you tell me I'm not at the last minute. . ." His cold stare suddenly cut me short. "Well, I want to go," I finally snarled.

"You never did care about him, did you?" he slowly uttered in return.

I was confused and uncomfortable. Mike tried to support me by repeating that it was not my fault his brother had problems. Johnny simply turned that stare on him, only sharper, more direct. Mike realized he was out of line and shut up. Finally Johnny announced that he was going to see his brother and that was it.

The night of the prom I went to a movie with a couple of my shyer, less popular friends. I felt like a misfit who couldn't get a date.

The next day I moped around the house. By nine I was feeling really depressed, and had decided to go to bed early, but then Johnny came over after seeing his brother. I was still mad and felt like complaining but again his face stopped me. It wasn't cruel like the other day but stunned, confused, frightened. He moped in and sat down silently. With a bland expression, I asked what was the matter.

"I saw my brother," he mumbled.

"Yes?"

Suddenly his face became contorted.

"He was in a padded room, Johnny began, "lying in a corner trembling in painful convulsions. Periodically he would come out of his fits but only to mumble gibberish." Johnny stopped with his eyes gazing at the floor his lips trembling. I wanted to comfort him. I tried by asking if his brother could be cured. He didn't answer.

"You know the worst thing was his eyes," he continued. "No matter what was happening, they remained blank. In the fits, during the ravings, they just stared into nothing. It was as if his soul was separated from all physical reality, even from me."

Now I was really confused. I wanted to say something but what could I say? Finally an awkward question formed in my brain.

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Don't know. One of the things he kept saying in his delirium was our counselor's name-Justice."

That scared me. I didn't know what it meant, what was going to happen.

"Look, Johnny," I cried, "it isn't Mr. Justice's fault your brother's in that place."

"Sam hung around the wrong people. That's why Justice gave him such a hard time. He systematically weeded him out, didn't he? That's what they do in our school-get rid of the bad apples, not help the troubled kids." Suddenly an idea showed on Johnny's face. He looked up at me. "Besides, if Justice hadn't worked so hard to get him expelled, he wouldn't have left home, he wouldn't be there, would he?"

I could tell Johnny had made a decision, but I didn't know what. All I knew was that it would occur soon, as surely as the coming of the sun. I would simply have to wait.

That wait wasn't long. It happened the next schoolday. We were eating lunch. Johnny hadn't said a thing. He just waited at the table and ate. Then, alarmingly his face became excited. At the entrance stood Mr. Justice: tall, skinny, white crew cut hair, neat crisp suit.

John's eyes fixed on him. He rose, picked up his tray and strode to his destiny. Mike instinctively went to his side. Justice glanced uncomfortably towards Johnny before they passed, then their fates collided.

The tray crashed into Justice's face: In the instant of blindness after it had slid sown, Johnny's fist slammed into his teeth. A foot came violently into the counselor's crotch,

causing him to double over in pain. Johnny turned from his prey, clutched a chair, raised it high into the air and smashed his skull.

Suddenly, he was thrown aside. The bulky body of a football coach had barged into the picture. Johnny remained on the floor between the tables, out of my sight. Mr. Justice's body lay hidden behind the coach. Mike stood stunned beside the whole scene. I crept forward and quickly glanced at the crimson corpse. Far more pitiful was the sight of stout Johnny lying on the floor, clutching a chair to his bosom, crying in agony.

Two weeks passed. John's parents were away on some unimportant legal matter; Mike and I stopped in to visit. We weren't really trying to cheer him up. He didn't seem to need that. Since his release on bail he seemed, ironically, to be peacefully resolved, almost resigned. We tried to get him to go out for a pizza or something. He refused. He said he just wanted to spend a quiet evening at home listening to music, ao we left him in peace.

Once we were gone, Johnny poured himself a gin and tonic, and crept to his room. The album he decided to listen to was Elton John's "Carabou". He put the needle directly on the last song "Ticking". All the others seemed out of place, unimportant.

The song began. It told the story of a troubled young man, ignored by society, whose problems explode in a bar-room holdup. Society in turn, rallies to eradicate the disturbance. Johnny sipped his drink, relaxed and listened to the story. The line came "Oh, the gun must have felt so smooth and warm, cradled in your hand." It was half over. He reached down and grabbed a metallic object by the bed. The words rolled on, the drink shrank. "Throw out your gun; walk out slow; just keep your hands held high." Johnny finished his drink. The time was near. He sucked the barrel into his mouth. It had the tart taste of cold steel. Johnny was kissing death: "But they pound you full of lead as you step outside the door. Oh, you danced for the devil like a marionette, to the vengeance of the law." The trigger. A flash of light filled his eyes, a loud blast shocked his ears, and then the back of his head was jarred violently. Jhonny Baker was no more.

Two more weeks passed. Mike and I were at Kim Anderson's graduation party. I had been happy going with Mike since it happened, but something was wrong that night. Mike got real quiet, kind of like poor Johnny. He had that same look, but different somehow, with another character in it. I don't know. Anyway I tried to brighten him up. We were sitting in a corner. Mike had a beer in one hand and his other arm around my shoulders. I turned toward him, put my hand on his chest and smiled up at him.

"What's tha matter?"

Mike smiled back. "I've been thinking. Have you ever thought about Johnny?"

"Of course I have."

"Why did he die?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I can tell you what he was trying to do. He wanted to get rid of evil Mr. Justice who he saw destroy his brother and other children too. But Justice didn't deserve to die. He wasn't a hateful man, he was an egoist. He wanted to make his school perfect by getting rid of the misfits. He couldn't be allowed to hurt kids lives like that. Johnny wanted to stop him but he failed. Justice is gone but the administration is still there; the problem still exists. But he didn't die for nothing. I won't let that happen. I owe it to him." Mike's smile became almost sadistic as he looked down at me. "But first I'm breaking up with you" he cried. A moment passed. I didn't know what to say. I guess I never did. Finally, he said something about my needing to learn how to care and walked out. I never saw him again, though I believe he went on to serve on a school board down south.

Anyway, all that happened twelve years ago. I don't know why, what it all meant. I guess it was just an exciting part of my youth. Anyway, I'm happily married now and my son's an "A" student. I guess that's all that matters.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The following story won the Fiction Award for Francine Tolf.

MINCH AND THE DIAMONDS

Once upon a time, in a land of smokey-blue mountains and black forests and craggy, brown cliffs where cumbersome dragons teetered and poked one another peevishly with scaley tails, there lived a troll by the name of Minch. And a nastier troll never lived. Oh, he was a devil! A miserly, snarling, uncouth troll who picked his nose in public as well as in private and never washed himself, not even once. He lived in an old, gnarled, hollowed-out tree stump underneath a bridge, and whenever village people crossed it on their way to the market place, he would hide under it, clutching a long branch in his stubby fingers. When they reached the top of the bridge, he would stick the branch out and trip them. And when those poor villagers were on their rumps, holding their sprained ankles or stubbed toes and rocking back and forth in pain, then what did that devil do? He scampered up from his hiding place like a troll half his age, and snatched the purse of whatever unlucky person had been tripped. Sometimes he would even squat down and pinch them gleefully.

The villagers were helpless against this horrid, little creature, for trolls have magical powers and can cast spells of temporary bemusement. No one dared to demand his purse back; one hard working peasant, after being robbed by Minch, had angrily followed him to his tree stump. No one had ever heard of him since, but a knobby kneed donkey who bore a remarkable resemblance to the old man was seen a few days later, wandering about with a lost expression an its sad, wise face.

Now, Minch's bridge--for it was regarded as such by the villagers--was the only one, within many, many miles which spanned the river Whoosh. Whoosh was a turbulent, rushing river, full of jagged rocks and dangerous whirlpools Since the people were afraid to risk wading through it, and since they equally feared that malevolent troll, it was not long before they stopped going to the market place entirely. And how hard that was for them! Those poor farmer's wives longed to visit the open square again, to browse among the colorful stalls for bright cloths and laces and pretty trinkets. Without the market place, their husbands were unable to exchange their pigs and geese and barley for badly needed goods. But what could they do? They were stuck on the other side of the bridge. So for weeks and weeks they went without sugar and chocolate bars and new shoes and gossip and all of the other things that make life truly worth living. And even if they could have crossed the bridge, they had no coins left to buy anything. Minch, through his wicked tricks, had stolen every farthing they had.

For that unholy, wart-infested troll was a miser. He cared for nothing but his stolen treasures,which were hoarded in the tree stump and guarded jealously. And what treasures Minch had! Piles and piles of golden coins, long strands of rosey sea pearls, silver goblets and buckles, and precious gems of every kind. He reveled in his riches. He fondled and caressed the pearls with dirty fingers. He built castles from gold coins. He spread the jewels out in sunlight, where they winked and sparkled in the sandy grass like a glittering carpet. He built pyramids of goblets at night, and performed strange troll dances around them in the moonlight. As he was drooling and gloating over his treasure, Minch kept a wary eye, lest some great raven should come swooping down and ensnare a coin in his curved beak. If baby rabbits, while playing, hopped too close to his jewels, he made horrible faces at them and snarled viciously.

There was one treasure, however, that even Minch could not get his hands on. He was certain that some river urchin or mermaid, (for there are mermaids in rivers, although they are genrally shy creatures), possessed it, for on sunny days he could see it spread out in splendor on the surface of the river. Day after day, Minch sat cross legged on a mossy stone, surrounded by fat mushrooms and singing reeds, and watched the river Whoosh, fascinated. Parts of it rippled, rippled endlessly, some spots were dark and smooth as glass, and one patch was carelessly strewn with diamonds that trembled and danced on its surface. How he craved those diamonds! His fingers itched to touch them, his mouth watered to see them, and his whole troll soul was consumed with envy for whoever owned such a wonderful treasure.

One day, while he sat on the stone conniving in his crafty mind how to get a hold of those jewels, a gnome wandered by and saw him. Now, gnomes are cozy, jolly creatures who do not usually venture forth from their beloved woods. But Moo was tired of trees. He had been exploring the river bank and sniffing cattails delightedly all morning, when he saw Minch huddled grumpily on the stone.

"Whatever are you staring at?" asked Moo.

"None of your business!" snapped Minch, who did not care for gnomes. "And stop breathing down my neck! Gives a troll the jidders."

Suddenly the gnome's eyes twinkled with amusement. "Do you want to know the latest forest gossip, Minch? Everyone thinks that you're plotting and planning to capture those diamonds." He pointed to where they dazzled on the river.

Minch grunted and looked at him suspiciously. "Oh, ho! Well, they better not try to get them first. I saw them and they're mine."

Moo chuckled. "You stupid troll! They aren't diamonds at all. That's only the play of sunlight on water."

This remark infuriated Minch so much that he ran and got his stick, intending to chase the gnome away. But Moo had already dissappeared into a field of sunflowers.

"That insolent half-wit!" seethed Minch. "How dare he come by with his nose twitching and try to trick me into thinking those diamonds aren't real! No doubt the nasty cur wants them for his own. Well, he won't get them!"

That afternoon, Minch thought and thought, racking his brains for a scheme to possess the diamonds. Finally, when blue shadows fell and full-throated frogs began their nightly seranade, a slow grin spread from one pointed ear to the other. He rubbed his hands together in glee. Ha! He had found a way to capture those elusive, trembling stars! It was so obvious that he wondered why it had not occured to him before. All he needed to do was to wade out to where they were, and scoop them up with a net. "A very fine net," thought Minch, "so that not one slips through." Minch did not especially care for the idea of getting wet -- for trolls hate water even more than cats. But such a magnificent treasure was worth it.

The next day, he spent all morning weaving a strong, fine-fibered net, made from threads of reeds. Any other morning he would have been counting his yellow coins, or gloating over his rubies. But Minch had no time for that today. He weaved and grinned and chuckled, and sang snatches of his fovorite troll dities.

A wicked troll am I!
I pinch and cheat and lie,
pluck petals off of stems
and hoard my lovely gems...

So sang that malific troll. By twelve o'clock, his net was all woven. He then rolled his trousers up, and tied his long, tangled beard on one side of his head with a big, red bandanna. But he hesitated before stepping into the rushing river. "Sunlight, indeed! Hee hee! Moo will be pea green with envy when he sees that they're mine!--oomph!" Minch had stumbled on a sharp pebble, and slipped down into the boggy mud. He picked himself up, snarling and cursing, but still intent upon reaching the diamonds.

The funny thing was that no matter how much deeper into the river he tread, the patch of strewn diamonds always remained the same distance away from him. "This certainly is odd," thought Minch irritable, hating every minute of wetness . "This morning, they were right--there!" Right by that willow tree!" Whoosh rushed past his knees, swirling and frothy.

Minch began to get a little nervous as he felt the cold water seeping into his boots and pulling him with the powerful current. A shiver of fear swept through him, and he remembered what Moo had said. "Maybe--maybe Moo was right. Maybe they aren't diamonds." But there they were, enticing and beckoning him and just out of reach. It seemed to Minch that someone was taunting him. "I'll let no river urchin get the better of me!" he thought angrily. "Not if my name is Minch Makikkinbob!" And with that, he took a great step--and was sucked into a deadly whirlpool.

Back on the river bank, a village lad with a large, lumbering frame and a cheshire cat smile was ambling through cattails and tiger lilies, humming to himself. It was past noon, and Torr should have been feeding the pigs, but he much preferred chasing butterflies. When he glanced up at the river, he was amazed at what he saw. "My!" exclaimed Torr. "I've seen many a strange sight, but I never saw a fish with ears as long as that! And red ones!"

Just then, the rest of Minch bobbed to the surface, and Torr saw that it was not a fish at all, but a little man who was spitting and sputtering and waving his arms about wildly.

Francine Tolf

The red things he'd thought were ears were the ends of a huge, red bandanna. Torr stood on the bank and scratched his curly head in puzzlement. "Hmmm... now where have I seen that little man before." Suddenly he remembered. It was the troll who had tripped him and taken his pouch of coins! It was the fiend who had terrorized the countryside for weeks and weeks! The reason why he could not visit the market place and see a certain red-cheeked girl with long eyelashes and dimples! "Oh ho!" thought Torr. "Now's my chance to get even with this rascal!"

Minch, struggling and spitting water, saw that someone was standing on the river bank. "Help me!" he cried. He bobbed into the rushing torrents, then came up again. "Wretched fool!--can't you see that I'm drowning?"

Torr planted his feet far apart and crossed his arms most decisively. "Are you Minch Makikkinbob the odious? The troll who trips and pinches and turns peasants into donkeys?"

"Yes!" cried Minch, flailing his arms and bobbing.

A very clever idea came to Torr. "I'll rescue you... but only if you agree to certain conditions. If you don't, why then I'll sit on the bank and watch you drown!"

Trolls are sturdily built creatures, but Minch had been fighting against the strong sucking of the whirlpool for a long time. He was growing weaker every minute. "Anything!" he shrieked. "I'll agree to anything! But hurry, blithering idiot, before it's too late!"

"Do you promise to stop scaring people away from your bridge?"

"Yes!"

"Do you promise never to pinch or steal chickens or keep villagers awake with your drunken singing?"

"Yes!"

"And do you promise to give back all the coins you've stolen?"

"Yes, yes! Get the lead out of your feet or I'll be one dead troll!"

Torr plunged into Whoosh. A few moments later, he had pulled the soaken, shivering figure of Minch up on a sandy bank. As the troll lay wheezing and gasping and hiccuping, (for Minch had swallowed a good deal of the river), Torr chewed a reed and observed him. He was heartily pleased with himself. "And everybody thought I wasn't the least bit clever. Humph! Wait until the village hears that it was Torr who brought them back their purses, and renewed safe crossing of the bridge once more. I am a remarkably clever boy!"

He waited until Minch had subsided his hiccuping and gasping. Then he said in his new, stern, masterful voice "Well now, Minch! You've got some promises to be carried out. For starters let's go to your tree stump and you can give me back all the villagers' money that you so wickedly stole!"

Minch, who lay sprawled on his stomach, rolled his head to the side where Torr spoke. His face was splotched with sand and the ends of his bandanna were wetly plastered to his cheeks. A crafty gleam appered in his eyes. "Whatever are you talking about, stupid boy?"

Torr felt hot color rise to his cheeks. "You know very well what I'm talking about!" He began to stammer. "I heard you! I--you--they--were the only reason why I didn't let you drown like you deserved to!"

Minch began to chuckly nastily. "What a dullard you are! Hee,hee! Maybe this will teach you not to go mooning around cattails when ther's chores to be done!" He chuckled until he started gasping and choking again, while Torr sat in stupidified shock. He then scrambled up nimbly and made horrible barking noises at Torr. "Go away now, or I'll turn you into a dragon fly and pull off your wings!"

Torr, who was badly frightened at Minch's noises, became utterly terrified after hearing this last remark, and took off running as fast as he could.

Minch, still chuckling, did a few clumsy pirouettes, troll fashion. But suddenly he remembered the diamonds. They were still there, dancing on the river. "Moo must have been right... it could be sunlight." But he still wasn't sure. "Perhaps if I built myself a little boat, I could row out there and be certain...in fact, I'll build it tomorrow!"

As for Torr, he was still running like a demon was on his tail, positive that any second he would find himself a dragon fly and have his wings plucked off. Silly boy! He should have known that trolls never keep promises.

* * * * * * * * *

THE ESCAPE

Mike Vollmer

The beach was windblown cold as the sun finally slid quielty behind the horizon. A tall, slight figure pushed the sand between his toes deliberately in his quest for nightfall. He would wait, as he always

had , for the dark sounds of the ocean to speak its magic.

At the jetty the man sat on the rocks and lit a match, revealing a flat negro nose clinging to his face below a wild crop of bushy hair. The sweet smell of marijuana drifted out to sea in a conjugal response; and there was humming.

These big, black hands held the head of a retreating mind as it hummed a slow blue tune. Not the tune of a cotton-picking slave, not the tune of a chain-gang boy, not the tune that helps to relieve by forgetting, but just a slow blue tune. No special rhythm, no melodious prayer, just a tune with an irregular beat that at times defied breathing. The humming stopped as the sounds of cuddling lovers from down the beach found their way through his haze.

He gets up slowly, the burden he carries being heavier, and finds his way to a lonelier piece of beach-and again the humming.

Why does she do him the way she does? She wants to make him think that they are so right, anything else would be a lie. He knows she loves him, but he just can't get through his non-feeling for her. Although the power he holds over her can feed a need, he suspects her submission as just another of her ploys to have him share her delusions of building a picket fence around them, their oaks, and their children to live happily ever after. So little of life she chooses to understand.

He lights another cigarette and sucks deep, fighting the choking response of his lungs crying for air. Suddenly a pale, puffing man and his dog materialize. The joggers' eccentric breathing is interrupted by barking out ignored orders to the dog. The black man had distant thoughts of how the dog was the only one enjoying this evening jog along the beach.

His solitude had been irrepairably broken by the prattle of human existence, goddamn southern California, so he decides to go to Chico's Beach Palace and Saloon.

II

"Hey Ski, what's happening?," were the first words he had spoken for nine hours.

The bartender looked up and moving over, from his barstool to behind the bar, said,"Nothing what's with you?"

The man shrugged and grunted, then whispered thanks when a schooner of beer was put on a warped paper coaster in front of him. Sliding back to his barstool, Ski studied the expressionless face for any sign of weakness when he said, "Hey Zapper, Elizabeth came in here today looking for you...twice."

The corners of his mouth went down for only a moment, then he took a long draw from the beer. He placed the schooner down without malice while the grin grew slowly on his face. Flashing his beautifully contrasted pearls he chuckled, "Hey man, don't fuck-up a good high with the mention of crazy white girls. This is not the time nor the place for a discussion of racially mixed couples. Do you know what I mean?" They both laughed, even though Ski saw little humor in poking fun at his best friends' wife.

III

Ski told Zapper to knock off the shit. He had been around long enough to recognize when two people look good together. He had met plenty of people in this bar over the last seven years. He had seen every size, shape, and most chromosome combinations walk or sometimes crawl through his door.

The black man sits at the bar, thinking his own thoughts and trying to ignore the mindless ramblings of the slightly sentimental barkeeper who hasn't been laid for the last six and one-half years. His views on the other sex were only ideas. Ideas never allowed to be sown and nurtured by his stupid kindness, only to have it grow back and suffocate him. He had never seen the fruit of his love being hauled down by every hobo that happened by. Yes, this was the only man to give him the right advice on how to handle his sweet white wife.

After Zapper's nose had gotten numb and the top points of his cheekbones were getting there, the place started to fill up with the usual weeknight crowd. The wild dancers, who could whip themselves up to a frenzy with little or no provocation, the cowboys, who were there to drink whiskey and knock their heads together, and a few happy looking couples were there just to make Zapper miserable.

IV

The juke box would alternately blast out a catchy danceable number then a sad country moan. Because there exists a relationship between music and the way people act, first the dancers sweat like crazy and then everyone would stick their heads in a bottle. The dancers would hug and kiss each other while the cowboys would take

turns punching one another and use the bottles as seditives by breaking them in strategic places behind the head. Chico's was the place for excitement. The different factions coexisted with a limited amount of problems. The dancers would kiss only dancers and the cowboys wanted to punch only cowboys, and they would both pay little attention to Ski and the Zapper, who occuppied the only off'limits seats in the house.

Once a dancer got too drunk and kissed a coyboy. As luck would have it, Ski saw it happen and quickly took the nickleplated .357 magnum from behind the bar and escorted the dancer to his death and the coyboy to life in prison, just outside the door of Chico's Beach Palace and Saloon.

V

It is one am and the crowd is beginning its slow descent back to the here and now. The dancers are near exhaustion. It is time for them to pair up to home, and make sweet love to the most recent fantasy. The flames of passion burn white hot when you shake your ass off for five drenching hours. All but the hardiest of cowboys are sleeping it off. They either consumed all the Jack Daniels their heads could hold or were sent to sleep by the same Jack Daniels bottle held firmly in the hand of someone who didn't like the looks of the new sleeping angel.

"The crowd is starting to drift out," Ski said absentmidedly.

"Yea," slurred Zapper, "Those dancing bastards are too hot to dance and just drunk enough to go home and immerse their entire beings into one wet moment."

Ski didn't like to see him this way. By now the euphoria of the reefer buzz had worn thin and the shots and beers were kicking in. The meanness spread over his black face like a faint white cloud closing in on his watery eyes. "I have to take a leak, when I get back I wanna goddamn round waiting for me." This was no request. Weaving his way to the men's room he finally stumbled into the piss-stink bathroom.

Once in the bathroom, Zapper felt nauseaus. He was walking that tight line between extreme intoxication and unconciousness. Pot is ok, but no feeling exists like too many shots of whiskey sitting on twice as many beers. He felt near dead, but mostly alive.

VI

The peeling gray walls and well aged stains on the porcelain gave ample evidence to the lie outside. The rustic saloon was clean and well kept, every trace of age was hidden under paint of darkness, but the men's room showed its deepest wrinkles. The splendid decay only heightened Zappers reckless approximation of reality. After shooting the liquor that hadn't been absorbed with great urgency against the stained fixtures he took out a small vial from his top pocket. He then unlatched his silver threaded neck chain and removed the silver ornament. The ornament looked like a minature soup spoon. He opened the vial with a combination of religious reverance and a scientific calmness. The black man then proceeded to shovel the white powder from the vial into his nostrils, taking turns so as not to destroy one without the other.

Important decisions were to be made this morning and he wanted to be prepared. A head full of snow helped to define his focus and the decisions were much easier to live with.

When the cocaine kicked the back of Zapper's brain hard enough, it was decided. He could either get another band together and tour this great country playing disco to the dancing fools of America or he oculd finally settle down and work at the Motorola plant in Escondido, still teaching guitar at night. It had been narrowed to these two options. The immediate decision was to drink one more round and go home to turn the light snow fall into a blizzard.

A much steadier Zapper emerged from the mens' room. Ski could guess correctly what caused the metamorphosis. He could also see the fish eyes performing concentric circles, tracing the revolving brain of his friend as he sat back down at the bar. Ski would join him for this final drink.

Zapper was full of the excitement that accompanies his motor racing in neutral. After this last round he would put it in gear. Before this day was out he would decide the direction of his life. This decision was put off during his service years, put aside while he was convalescing, and totally ignored while he attended school and gigged at night. The only

Mike Vollmer

decision two years of staying drunk and playing to drunks across the country produces, is to quit as soon as you can wriggle out of your contract.

VII

The last round was downed and Zapper stepped outside the bar and stood on the curb trying to locate the big dipper. He was unsuccessful. His mind raced as his head slid to a half-cocked position as he retraced the steps of a well worn path to his apartment.

Countless cars cruised the freeways transporting dreams in machines of steel and plastic. Trapped in speeding shells, losing all real concepts of space and time. Zapper would rather walk.

When he came upon his building he looked up to the second floor and noticed the light from the TV glowing against the living room curtains. She was probably sleeping with the test pattern shining in her face. Even good cocaine wasn't worth the hassle. He could not go in, instead he would head south. Mexico had fewer tourist during the summer.

Curt Cavnar

A TRUBUTE TO SUPERMAN

I looked out the frosted glass at absolute white. The white blanket of winter was descending upon humanity and the darker blanket that covers the sky was quickly replacing the sun.

I remember him, the gentle giant. Like so many things, I could not stop to understand him until he was already gone, until the life slipped from my fingers right before my very eyes. But how by the force of my emotions I have no choice.

We were young yet I remember those times when home from his work he would come, bringing presents sometimes, but always the welcome present of himself.

There we waited, the three of us, like elfant demons, snickering and carrying on while waiting for the minute he would open the door so that we might burst out to his suprise. How was it that he could be surprised night after night and never expect our outbursts? Where did the extra energy come that he provided us with after a long day's work? Where did the extra money come from for swing-sets and ballgloves that he could never use except to take the time to see that we had fun with them?

On those Sunday mornings we would wait in anticipation for the signal from mom and when it came we'd spring upon him as he lay upon the bed sleeping, only to awaken to three imps giving their best effort towards removing him from his comfortable rest. He'd whirl and writhe to try shaking us off, but we held on to him, clinging tightly as if some young suckling animals clinging to their parent. We tickled him and giggled all the while but finally, as always, he would surrender.

At one time I fell and bruised my head against the bedpost and like a faith healer, he rubbed it and said "Big boys don't cry." And just because he said it, it didn't hurt. He was right. He was always right. We'd get into our spats and arguments; something that got hot tempered and flaring and I'd think he was the stupidest person in the world, five minutes later, after the fury, I'd only realize that I had been the fool and indeed, he was right again.

I can't help but think of him now. He did nothing historic, yet he affected the lives of so many. A man like that does not simply walk out of one's life; you don't forget about a person like that too easily.

And as I look out at the cold wet whiteness falling, I realize something else-for the first time in his life he is wrong. Big boys do cry.

Nancy Lockhart

A LITTLE THING

Loretta stared blankly out of the dirty kitchen window, no longer upset by the torn screen. November seemed far away from those days of mosquitoes and fat, black flies. Almost unconsciously, she shoveled spoonfuls of Cheerios into her pale mouth from what was once a margarine tub--it's Parkay label still in intact. The morning Times lay open to the sports page just as Tommy had left it.

She sighed as she looked at the three remaining circles floating in the yellow bowl, and decided to give what was left of her milk to the cat. With great effort Loretta forced herself to walk into the bathroom and run the water for her morning bath.

While the tub filled, she dragged herself into the bedroom, carelessly pulled up the bed covers over the rumpled sheets, and took greying tattered underwear from the top drawer, also disheveled. Loretta cared little about mending or replacing her worn things. For what? For whom?

The water in the tub was too hot and nearly overflowing by the time she returned to shut off the faucets, so she simply let the water drain, and stayed in her egg-stained robe. Rotely, the T.V. was turned on to the The Price Is Right, and left on for two soap operas after that.

By then it was noon, so Loretta fixed herself a sandwich, although she had no appetite. It was just something to do. The bologna looked a bit grey. Loretta ate it anyway, without mayonaise, mustard, or butter. Her daydream of being admitted to the emergency room with bologna botulism was interupted by the phone.

It rang eight times. Loretta refused to pick up the receiver, knowing it was probably her mother calling with the same lecture.

"Loretta dear, you've got to snap out of this mood you're in. Why don't you make an appointment with Lavonne to have your hair done? Buy a new dress. Believe me you'll feel a lot better. You're not the only woman in the world who's had a miscarriage, you know. I really think you are making a mountain out of a mole hill. You and Tom can always try again. You're a healthy young woman...."

The thoughts were broken again, this time by a commotion in the back yard. A garbage can had blown over and was rolling towards the shed. Oblivious to the cold and rain, Loretta ran out, and set the can against the house, not bothering to get the lid.

A single leaf on the young maple tree near the shed held her attention. She stood motionless getting drenched as she watched the leaf fight against the wind, until it broke free of the branch.

Drifting down over Loretta's dripping hair, the tiny red leaf rested on the ground next to her muddy slippers. Loretta picked up the leaf, trying to smooth its crumpled edges.

Once back in the kitchen she pressed the small leaf between the pages of the newspaper.

Feeling the crackling leaf break apart, Loretta wept.

Molly Burns

DANNY

Danny died when he was sixteen. His death was nothing remarkable, nothing memorable; he just died. I remember staring up at his bedroom window and wondering what it felt like to be dead. And I remember everything that happened when he was alive.

The house across the street had been empty for about two weeks when one morning while getting dressed I saw out my window a moving van unloading all kinds of furniture. A woman and three kids were standing about instructing the moving men where to, how and which way to put the furniture. Now in my neighborhood exciting things like new families (with kids even) don't happen often, so throwing on my shirt I ran downstairs and out of the door.

Standing there wide-eyed (as wide-eyed as an eight year old can be) I watched and listened, what a commotion! I watched with most special interest a boy, who looked about my age, throwing a little ball up in the air and catching it. After about the third time of dropping the ball he

looked up and noticed me standing there. Shyly he held the ball behind his back and just stared back.

"Give it here" I demanded testily.

And, he gave it to me, RIGHT IN THE STOMACH!

Never being able to hold a grudge very long, we ended up playing together with that stupid little styrofoam ball amidst the irritated legs of the moving men.

From that day on Danny and I were best buddies, with a few (very few) compromises of course. I was the boss! Sometimes.

We played Army, house, cops and robbers and built club houses with fantastic trap doors that didn't work. It seemed that Danny somehow always got the good equipment and I ended up with a squirt gun, or some such thing.

When holidays came around, Danny and I, as money hungry as you might guess, would make little cards and sell them to the neighborhood kids and the old ladies for a nickel each. And of course when mom found out we had to give all the money back. That which we hadn't spent on sweet tarts, that is!

One time we even stooped low enough to steal cherries from my neighbors cherry trees and selling the ones we were too full to eat. My mom never did find out about that one, but for a long time she wondered what ever happened to her colander.

One day as Danny and I were lolling around trying to figure out what we could do next we struck on a great idea. We went up to the corner and spread ketchup all over us and tied ropes all around us. Then lay there waiting for the results. A car stopped to ask us what happened, I guess we looked quite real from a distance, and Danny ran off leaving me behind to explain.

Well, the days passed, each bringing on a new episode. We continued to take hikes and play cops and robbers. Becoming more violent as the years passed. And I guess it was our twelth year that Danny went into the hospital for the first time. When he got out he was in a wheelchair for several months getting thinner and thinner. His mom would let him come outside in his chair and we would race, I would push him and little kids on bicycles would ride alongside of us. One day as we were racing we took a sharp corner and ended up on the ground, Danny's chair toppled on top of him and me on top of that. Wouldn't you know, his mom just happeded to be looking out of the window and that, needless to say, was the end of our "walks".

I always thought that Danny would get better after that, that it was just a temporary thing. But he just got weaker and kept going into the hospital for different treatments. We never really talked about it too much. I would ask him what was wrong with him and why he had to go to the hospital so much. He would just shrug it off and change the subject.

When we were thirteen we made up a contract, sighned in red berries, Danny got sick from the sight of real blood. We put it in the ground by the fire hydrant, the pipe thing with the cover over it. We planned to be followers of Bonnie and Clyde when we reached twenty, even though I knew Danny would never have enough guts to do it. One time he told me that he was going to die soon anyway and that it was good because he could never really rob and kill people anyway. I punched him. He could've stuck around to drive the get away car.

The only time I really got scared about him dying was when he went into the hospital. We were out smoking cigarettes behind the woodpile, and sharing a quart of my parents Blatz beer when he had something that resembled an asthma attack. I helped him home and next thing I knew his parents were dragging him off to the hospital. It seemed that they were making a big thing out of nothing.

I went to see him the next day after school. He looked all pale and his voice was raspy. I couldn't look at him, he made me sick. He told me he wasn't coming home this time, that he was going to die in the hospital. That made me really mad, I started to cry and tried for it not to show. I screamed and he smiled.

"I hate you Danny, you broke our contract, you skinny ugly thing."

And his reply was only "get the hell out of here." He knew I hated sentimental endings.

The wake was disgusting. I laughed hysterically. I laughed at the priest, all the old relatives that Danny probably never met yet who had tears in their eyes. I laughed because I knew that they were waiting for the whole deal to end so they could go home and cry into their alcohol. And I hated them all.

Before they closed the casket I took the contract and layed it beside him next to the rosary (Danny didn't even know the words to a Hail Mary). The contract was all taped, I had ripped it up, but he broke it so he had to keep it. I hated Danny then; he was at peace the priest said. But he shouldn't have been; he was never at peace, he was always hyper. He was always running, and he ran too far this time.

"Chicken" I thought to myself.

Richard Merrill

A MONOLOGUE BY A POLICE OFFICER

"Hi there! How ya doin'May I see your license please? You do have a license, don't you? You do? Wonderful! I don't care what they say about people being cold-hearted. I think people in general are very cooperative. Let's see now. A Mr. R_____ S. M_____. Well, Mr. M_____, your eyes look a little tired. Not enough sleep, eh? Yeah. I have that trouble, too sometimes. I'll tell ya what, Mr. M_____, I'll show you what I got in my pockets if you show me what's in yours. Deal? No? Well, I'll play anyway. (Pulls out revolver.) First, I got this. Huh? You've decided to play all of a sudden? Wonderful! People are so cooperative! You may put your belongings on the hood of my squad, if you want. I don't mind. Let's see here. A wallet? Yeah, I got one of those. A comb? Yeah, I got one of those. A hanky? Yeah, I got one of those. Bag of reefer? No, I don't have one of those. A pipe? No, I don't have one of those. A pack of E-Z Widers? No, I don't have one of those. I'll tell ya - - - huh? Why did I pull you over in the first place? I guess I'm just a friendly type of guy, Mr. M_____. I like talkin' to people. I like talkin' to you, Mr. M_____. In fact I like talkin' to ya so much, that we should talk somewhere else. It's gettin' a little chilly out here, don't you think? Why don't we go to my place? We'll take my car, ok? Before we go, I'd like to check out your car, see how safe it is. We're very safetyminded around here, Mr. M_____. Wouldn't wanna see anything happen to ya. So, why don't you (motions with revolver) just crawl into the squad, Mr. M_____, an' wait for me, ok? I'll only be a minute!"

(Later....)

"Guess what, Mr. M_____. Your car is safe! Ankle-deep in candy-bar wrappers, but safe! An' d'ya know what else? I turned the car off, shut off your headlights an' locked her up for ya! I also put a little, red sticker on the window so a friend of mine can pick it up for ya later! I even brought ya yer keys! Now, Mr. M_____ (starts squad), let's talk over this bag-o-reefer situation. (Squad rolls away.) First of all, you have the right to remain silent....."

Richard Merrill

THE KILLING MACHINE

Jennifer thought that the soles of her shoes would melt from the sun-baked, smoldering pavement. She looked up at the menacing, orange ball in the sky. The sweat ran down her neck, between the two halves of her halter top and down her belly. She threw her backpack off and sat down on it.

A car was coming. Jennifer extended her left arm and thumb. The car whizzed by.

Another car. Jennifer did the same thing. No luck.

A semi-truck. Forget it.

Jennifer brushed her long, blonde, hair out of her face, dug a finger and thumb into her ragged purse and produced a cigarette. Her hand fished into the purse again as the cigarette dangled limply out of the corner of her now-pouting mouth. No matches. She looked some more. Nothing.

"Shit!"

In frustration, Jennifer yanked the cigarette out. Her full lips had dried to it, sticking fast to the filter. She gasped with pain as she held her mouth with one hand, cigarette with the other. Tears almost came to her eyes as she glared down at the cigarette in her palm, expecting to see a pair of dried lips permanently fused to the filter.

"Shit!"

Jennifer threw the cigarette down and ground it with her heel, making it part of the pavement.

Jennifer sat there, exposing her thumb for six or more cars before one finally pulled over. She got up with her backpack and started to climb into the car before she noticed the contents of it.

The three young men stared at her strangely.

Horniness?

"Need a lift?"

Better safe than sorry.

"Not with you!"

The car sped off. It was an old, rusty Dodge.

Jennifer began walking again

An hour or so passed. Jennifer still walked. The only passers-by now were semis. They didn't pick up hitch-hikers.

It had cooled off, though. A couple more hours and it would start getting dark. A minute breeze had picked up.

It seemed so routine to Jennifer that when she heard a car approaching from behind her, she automatically turned slightly and extended her thumb which she did this time.

She saw no one on the road until she made a total about-face to discover that the car she heard was on the wide shoulder of the road. Normally she would have smiled. This time, however, she ran. The car, heading toward her at full speed, made Jennifer jump into the ditch along the highway at the last second as the speeding auto smashed into her backpack, scattering its contents all over the pavement. The vehicle sped on.

Jennifer, outwardly cussing her own idiocy for dropping her backpack when she jumped, was inwardly cringing with terror. Whoever drove that car was intentionally trying to run her down. The three dudes in that Dodge. It had to be them.

"Worthless bastards!"

Jennifer dodged uncaring motorists, collecting what she could find of her backpack and its former contents.

She got everything together. Her backpack was pretty well beaten up, but it would have to suffice. She was bending over, putting her things back together when she heard the roar again. She gasped at what the car had done: gotten off at the next exit, gone around and got back on the interstate again.

Jennifer threw her backpack in first, before joining it in the ditch.

The auto came within a foot of the ditch.

Jennifer saw it this time.

It wasn't the Dodge.

It was an older model, though in very good shape. It was clean, shiny, and had a two-tone black and gold color. Jennifer figured it to be a late 50's or early 60's model.

Who was it?

Jennifer panicked: panic out of both, the known (what little of that there <u>was</u>) and the unknown. She panicked because she knew that someone was trying to get her. Then again, she panicked because she didn't know who or why.

Jennifer stepped out of the ditch and stared as far down the road as she could. Just in time to see the tail end of the automobile disappear up the distant exit ramp. They were going to do it again.

She turned just as the idea hit her. The frontage road. Deciding to leave her backpack in the ditch (she could pick it up later), she stumbled across the ditch and straddled the barbed-wire fence. As Jennifer crawled over, she heard the tearing of denim

and felt the tearing of flesh. Once over the fence, she inspected the inch-long, bloody wound on her thigh.

Jennifer dismissed the wound though because she figured herself safe. She had to be sure though. She could easily be spotted from the highway, but she wanted to stay close to her backpack and, God willing, a motorist that might help her. She decided to hide herself for awhile. She lay down flat in the tall grass by the fence.

It was dusk when Jennifer awoke. She rose up and stared at the cars and trucks cruising down the highway; she tried to look down to investigate her wound once more before she stood up, but something caught her eyes. Something big, something shiny, about 50 yards from where she sat, sat the car. It was running very low and very smooth. It had no license plates. The headlights were on. They seemed to be staring at her, laughing at her, mocking her. The setting sun reflected off of the grill which was like great rows of teeth, sardonically grinning at her.

It was waiting for her.

Jennifer distinguished the dark silouette of one, lone driver. The driver looked male by the shape of the shadow, but Jennifer couldn't make out a face. She imagined the man grinning at her, like the car was.

He was waiting for her.

Jennifer tried to look at all of her options through her fear-riddenen eyes and questioning mind. She could run. Where? She could climb back over the fence. Not enough time. She could sit there. She knew she could be seen and he could run her over right now if he wanted to.

Jennifer stood up.

The car's engine revved.

They both waited.

Then, Jennifer discovered another option. The window on the driver's side was about one fifth of the way rolled down. He could hear her.

Jennifer trembled as she spoke.

"What do--you--want?"

No answer.

"Why do you want to kill me for? I-I ain't done nothin'!"

Silence.

"Let me go---please!" Jennifer was openly crying now. "Please. I-I'll go. I won't tell nobody. I just wanna go."

The engine revved.

"If you're some kinda cop or somethin', and you wanna----"

The screeching of the tires almost totally snapped Jennifer's mind. She darted across the road, screaming hysterically as the car, running towards where Jennifer had been standing spun its rear-end into the fence, causing minor damage to the car. As Jennifer ducked into the cornfield across the frontage road and started running, the auto pulled back onto the road and screeched away.

Jennifer ran, nonstop, through the towering stalks. Fearing for her life, she ran and ran, becoming lost in the natural maze.

When Jennifer emerged from her cornfield-prison, she realized that she must have run in, more or less, a straight line, for she now saw a gas station across the road. It was night.

A gas station--Help.

Jennifer felt such relief that she almost collapsed on the spot, but staggering with fright, she made it across the junction to safety.

Ben was just shutting off the outside lights. He emerged from the back room and did not notice the staggering figure until the door opened.

Jennifer stood in the light now, panting, shaking and crying.

Ben stared at her.

"Can I---use---use your--phone?" Jennifer stammered between gasps.

"I guess so," Ben answered.

"Wait!" Jennifer paused as a look of realization came to her.

She was going to call the police until she realized that she would get busted too: hitchhiking.

But someone was trying to kill her.

No. Jennifer thought that if there was a way to avoid the "someone", she would take that way before involving cops.

"I better not," Jennifer said.

"Oh," Ben replied, a funny look on his face.

"Do ya think you could give me a ride?" asked Jennifer pathetically.

"Well---where to?"

"South. On the interstate."

"Well it'll take me another hour to close up."

"Could I wait?"

"No way! My boss'll be by soon an' if he found you here, he'd shit!"

Jennifer looked puzzled.

"You're a hitch-hiker, aren't you?" Ben finally asked.

"Yeah."

"My boss hates 'hikers. Can't stand 'em."

"You don't understand! Someone's tryin' t' kill me!"

"Huh?"

"Someone's tryin' to run me over! An old, black an' gold car; they've tried three times already! Couldn't you tell your boss that, and..."

"Sorry. He wouldn't buy it. Think you was lyin'. Did you get a good look at the driver of this car?"

"No. The figure of a guy drivin'."

"Is that the only one?"

"Yeah."

"Where did he try to..."

"On the interstate twice and once on the frontage road." Jennifer was calmer now.

"Oh. I dunno what to say. You'll have to leave before my boss gets here. I could call the cops."

"No!"

"You'd get it, too?"

"Right."

"You'll still have to leave. I wanna help ya, though. Just go down the junction that way," Ben pointed, "An' take Bush-City Road. That'll take ya right out to the interstate goin' south."

"Well----"

"I figure this yo-yo won't try nothin'. Junction's pretty busy an' no one goes down Bush-City Road. You got it made when ya hit that road."

"Yeah, but---"

"My boss'll be here any minute."

"My backpack! It's in a ditch by the interstate!"

"Oh."

A pause.

"I'll tell ya what," Ben finally said. "You get on Bush-City Road an' get on the interstate. After work I'll go out an' find yer backpack then drive south till I find you an' give it back to ya."

"I----Don't----"

"I really wanna help ya."

"Well----"

"Here," Ben interupted, unstrapping his wrist wastch, "Take my watch. Iget it back when you get your backpack back. If not, the watch is yours."

No answer.

"It's an $80 watch."

"Well, I guess so. You sure no one goes down this road?"

"Bush-City Road? It's got a bridge you wouldn't believe! Ya can walk it ok but I wouldn't drive a tricycle over it."

"Well," Jennifer started as she took the watch, "ok."

As Jennifer walked across the deserted filling station lot, Ben was inside, on the phone.

"Hello? Sheriff? This is Ben down at the station, here..."

Jennifer smiled as she beamed down at Ben's watch in her hand. It was one of those fancy digital ones. She put it back in her purse as she came upon the corner. She had all of her money in her purse. Even if that guy didn't get her backpack back to her, she still had his watch which she could sell very easily and enough money to get by on until she had done so.

All thoughts of the mysterious car had vanished from her mind, maybe because this is the longest time she had gone today without encountering it. Maybe it was just the reassurance of talking to another human being, reminding her that she and that menacing automobile were not the only two left on the face of the earth. Jennifer didn't know. All she knew is that this is the safest she had felt all day.

Jennifer glanced at the mud-splattered, Bush-City Road as she rounded the corner and started down the ominously dark path with quick, confident strides.

The only sounds that Jennifer heard were those of crickets and a mild breeze gently rustling every delicate thing it touched.

The sounds were broken by the low hum of an automobile engine.

The only thing Jennifer saw was darkness.

The darkness was broken by the headlights, looking the way they had before----resembling eyes staring sarcastically at her.

The engine hum was the same. It seemed to say to her over and over again: "Now I've found you. Now I've found you. Now I've found you." When the engine roared finally, it seemed to bellow: "GOTCHA!"

The rough sound of tires throwing gravel made Jennifer break into tears.

The car came closer.

Jennifer ran.

Through her tear-filled eyes, Jennifer could barely make out a bridge a long, long way up the road. Cars couldn't make it over. If she could only....

The fender of the metal monster could be seen out of the corner of Jennifer's left eye now.

She heard the car rev before it hit her.

The car swerved to her side. Jennifer felt cold steel, making her hipbone resound with an audible, ugly crack and throwing her atop the hood when the vehicle swerved to the opposite side, straightened up and took off. Jennifer rolled off and landed in the center of the path.

Jennifer lay on the gravel, crippled and in shock. When she heard the car turn around and saw the headlights, she knew that the driver, whoever he was, was coming back to finish the job that he had painstakingly spent all day trying to do.

The machine rolled mercilessly toward her useless body.

Jennifer turned her colorless face away from the car and laid the side of her head on the cold, coarse gravel.

She closed her red puffy eyes.

The left, front tire blossomed Jennifer's head over the gravel, reminding one of a red rose pressed between the pages of a Bible by a sentimental old lady. The rear, left tire spun fast enough to yank her outstretched arm out of socket, tearing it, leaving it barely connected to what used to be Jennifer. The front, right tire went over her already-mangled hip, disintegrating it more, the rear, right tire made her spine snap like a frustrated student on test-day, breaking his pencil in two.

The car headed back toward the direction from which Jennifer came. Its "eyes" sparkled at a job well done. Its "teeth" grinned in satisfaction at the taste of blood.

The vehicle turned out onto the junction.

Ben was waiting at the station, waiting for the sheriff to come with his money and a ride home.

Ben's black and gold, 1958 Oldsmobile was sitting in the garage. Ben was going to leave it at the station. Body-work. He had just washed it.

Ben sat back in the dark gas station, lighting a cigarette and wondering how much he enjoyed his moon-lighting job.

It wasn't hard (though this one he had trouble with) and it paid well. Damn Well!

This was the seventh one he had done away with in a month.

"....Anything to keep them fuckin' hippie, hitchhikers outta Brighton County..."

Those were the sheriff's exact words when he hired Ben.

Ben always figured himself the kind of guy who if he did something, he did it right. If the big cheeses decided that there was to be no more hitch-hikers in Brighton County and they depended on Ben to get rid of them, then, by God, he was going to do it and do it right.

Ben felt proud.

He smiled.

He still smiled when the sheriff's patrol car rolled up.

When the sheriff rolled his window down, Ben stuck his head in.

"Hey, Sheriff, I left my damn watch on this one. Think we could go back an' get it?"

* * * BOOK AND MOVIE REVIEWS * * *

A Month of Sundays - Reviewed by Phyllis Frischkorn

John Updike's A Month Of Sundays is a curiously optimistic book which relates the sexual exploits of an ordained Christian minister. The Reverend Thomas Marshfield finds himself in his forties with his marriage flat and uninteresting and his vocation lacking the rewards which might be expected. With his faith in himself and his Church waning, he seeks enlightenment and relief through a succession of adulterous relationships with first the church organist and then other devoted members of his congregation.

The Reverend Marshfield's escapades are inevitably discovered, with the result that he is sent to a desert retreat to repent of and reflect on his sin. Part of the penance he must pay in his exile is to spend his mornings in confession by virtue of a sheaf of blank paper provided for that purpose. It is through these writings that the reader learns the reasons which have led to his present condition. He writes on each of the thirty-one days, but on the four days which he calculates to be Sundays, habit forces him to write a sermon. The four sermons appear to analyze and lead to some understanding of his past six days' reflections.

In the first sermon he puts an end to his guilt as an adulterer by discussing the fact that Christ forgave adulterousness. He goes on to say that, if marriage is an unbreakable contract, then adultery is inevitable and forgiveable. In the second sermon he questions why, although we pray for miracles, they do not come. He concludes by cursing his congregation for lacking the faith which should move mountains. By the third sermon, he appears much more hopeful. He preaches that even those who are poor in spirit are blessed. There is hope for even the most faithless. In the final sermon, he seems to come to terms with his own faith. There ia a God who has set him down in this particular time and place. And he seems ready to go out and continue to serve that God.

As the Reverend Marshfield's month's exile nears an end, his confessions seem to prepare him for reentry into the community. But he needs a final acceptance by the silent proprietress, Ms. Prynne. She, who has read all his confessions, seems to signify forgiveness. When, on the final day of his stay, she joins him in a quick amorous romp, it seems that Reverend Marshfield is finally ready "to be born again."

The Reverend Thomas might bring to mind the Thomas of Christ's twelve disciples. The current Thomas, like his predecessor, has his doubts. And curiously enough, each turns out to be the most faithful.

One cannot read A Month of Sundays without noticing the parallels between it and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. Each writes about an adulterous clergyman. Updike's clergyman is named Marshfield to signify his somewhat soggy character. While Hawthorne's character is named Dimmesdale to denote a shadowy character. Marshfield's wife's maiden name is Chillingworth, ironically the name of Hester Prynne's husband. And, of course, Ms. Prynne bears the same name as Hawthorne's heroine. Each book is divided into four parts which emphasize a particular theme. Hawthorne's thesis is that sin, in this case adultry, breeds isolation which breeds further sin. Eventually, the sinner must either destroy himself or rejoin the community looking for forgiveness. Updike, uses the same thesis updating it to contemporary times. He also isolates his adulterous clergyman. Ironically, however, his hero seeks forgiveness by using his final adulterous act as his method of gaining that forgiveness. Symbolically, one might suspect that Tom Marshfield has found love; and that love has redeemed him.

Fear of Flying- Reviewed by Phyllis Frischkorn

The protaganist in Erica Jong's Fear of Flying suggest that she is a character full of contradiction. Named Isadora after Isadora Duncan, she aspires to independence and the life of an artist. Named Zelda for Fitzgerald's Zelda, she is a dependent female who had trouble dealing with reality. White Wing is defined in the dictionary as "a person who is employed to remove the rubbish." Isadora is a woman who must "clean the rubbish" which is dealt to her as a woman before she can realize her full potential as an artist. Finally, Wing is ironic in that Isadora is a bird who is afraid to fly.

As her names would imply Isadora is full of conflict. She bears the burden of not only being a woman, but a woman seeking to be an artist. When a woman attempts to shake loose society's preconceived ideas of her place in that society, a large share of guilt is her penalty to pay. But Isadora has a double debt to pay because she is also Jewish. Guilt seems to be the universal gift of Jewish parents to their children.

Isadora's family may be Jewish, but not in the traditional sense. Her grandfather forbad "any religious baloney." Her family is a veritable United Nation. Sister Randy is married to an Arab. Sister Lelah is married to a Negro. Sister Chloe is married to a German Jew. And Isadora's husband is Chinese. Despite the family's liberated attitude towards inter-marriage, they remain firm in their attitudes about the role of the female. Her primary duty is to be that of procreator. Even Isadora's mother gives up her life as an artist for her children.

Isadora's mother is also a character full of contradiction. Indeed, Isadora tells us that she has two mothers. The first is the artist who detests anything ordinary. She exhibits her independence by always attempting to be different. This is the mother who distributes guilt and distresses her daughter with her differentness. The second mother is the traditional one who satisfies her children's need for mothering. Regardless of Judith's need to be liberated, she has some very traditional ideas about women's behaviour towards the opposite sex. Judith has provided her daughter with conflicting female models with which she can identify.

Isadora has a fantasy as, they say, we all do. Her fantasy, which she calls the "zipless fuck," involves the man that she can have with no restraints, no past, and no future. Although she apparently loves her husband, he is too

serious and plays the game by all the rules. When she meets Adrian Goodlove, she sees in him the antithesis of Bennett. With Adrian she can live her fantasy; or so she thinks. With her multiple fears delaying her flight with Adrian , she eventually talks herself into the fact that Adrian will supply that missing something in her life.

The following two weeks of supposedly free flight through Europe with her lover does not live up to Isadora's expectations. The final blow comes when she discovers that Adrian is also governed by a set of rules. No one is really and truly ever free.

Somewhere, between hopping in and out of bed with Adrian, Isadora discovers some basic truths about herself. The first thing she learns is to sort out reality from fantasy. No matter how valuable are our fantasies, they should remain fantasies. As she states, "The man under the bed can never be the man over the bed." The other truth is that she does not need a man "to complete herself." She has been blaming the men in her life for her unhappiness. When she learns to shed some of her dependencies, she sheds some of her fears as well.

What is curious is that Isadora returns to her husband. One assumes that, if the marriage survives, it will be entirely different in content. One might suspect that Ms. Jong will write subsequent books about Isadora. This reader is most curious to hear more concerning the fearless flight of the new Isadora.

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Richard Brautigan's A Confederate General From Big Sur: Reviewed by Richard Merrill

A highly-renowned English instructor said once that one couldn't have a British literature course without Lawrence and Joyce or an early-American literature class without E.A. Poe, etc. But, as far as contemporary literature goes, it couldn't survive on just a few writers of today. I won't say that Richard Brautigan is to the 20th century what Poe is the 19th, but because of Brautigan's incredible, unique and witty style; I would consider him just as important as Roth, Vonnegut, Tolkien or whoever.

I went about reading this book as I have the previous, five, Brautigan books: in one sitting.

I won't say that I understand Brautigan all of the time. I don't think that there are too many people who can say that and mean it. His style is so damn compelling though, that I'm hooked from the first page.

Incredible, unique, witty, compelling: A Confederate General From Big Sur is all of that.

The only thing I can get out of it is that a group of free spirits, led by the "General", Lee Mellon, try to bring back the Civil War. I don't know. To me, as far as Brautigan is concerned, plot is a very secondary thing.

Brautigan is genuinely funny:

"...the Digger Indians didn't wear any clothes. They didn't have any fire of shelter or culture. They didn't grow anything. They didn't hunt and they didn't fish. They didn't bury their dead or give birth to their children. They lived on roots and limpets and sat pleasantly out in the rain."

Brautigan is weird (but it's a fun kind of weird):

"...it was going back to Norway, carrying the hides of 163 cable cars as part of the world commerce deal...they traded a rainy spring morning in Oslo for 163 cable car hides from San Francisco."

Brautigan is strong satire:

"An old woman lived in that room. She was 84 and lived quite comfortably on a government pension of 35¢ a month."

It's not only satirical of government, but of war. Lee Mellon launches an "Attack":

"....he had tunneled his way to the main gas line and was now enjoying the rather dubious fruits of his labor: a six foot long blue flame. And that his eyebrows were gone."

Brautigan has an unusual way of exagerating:

"I knew that if I ate abalone again I would die. If so much as one more bite of abalone were balanced in my mouth, I knew that my soul would slide out like toothpaste and be diminished for all time in the universe."

It's absurd. In one part, the narrator, Jesse, defends his counting of punctuation marks in Ecclesiastes by stating that before they build a ship, they have to know how many and what size(s) rivets it'll take to hold the ship together. Good comparison Did you know (according to Jesse's count) that the second chapter contains 103 punctuation marks: 45 commas, 12 semi-colons, 15 colons, 6 question marks, and 17 periods?

Brautigan's play with dialogue is hysterical:

"What do your parents do?"

"I'm their daughter..."

"...sounds like a vaguely familiar story. Conan Doyle, I guess. The Case of the Smart-Ass Daughter..."

Excellent wordplay and comparison:

"My cup of coffee changed into an albino Polar bear: I mean cold and black."

Another example of the above would be when Brautigan refers to a well-endowed joint as a "B-17 Bomber."

I think that the idea of a plot playing second fiddle is brought out more in A Confederate General From Big Sur than in any other Richard Brautigan book. The reason is the ending. Ending? Which ending? The reader actually has his pick among five, given endings. My own favorite is #4. Lee Mellon, his girl Elizabeth, Jesse, his girl Elaine and Roy Earle, a crazy, rich suburbanite are by the Pacific coast:

"A seagull flew over us. We got dressed and went back to Lee Mellon and Elizabeth. Roy Earle was there with them. It was good that I was not surprised.

They were all standing together, in the surf and throwing Roy Earles' money into the Pacific Ocean. Hundred dollar bills scattered off their hands.

"What are you doing?' I said.

Lee Mellon turned toward me, hundred dollar bills still falling off his hands, floating down into the water.

'Roy Earle doesn't want his money anymore and we're helping him throw it in the ocean.'

'We don't want it either.' Elizabeth said.

'All this money ever did was bring me here,' Roy Earle volunteered as the hundred dollar bills fluttered like birds onto the sea.

'You can have it,' he said addressing the waves. 'Take it home with you.' And they did."

The endings don't end at #5 however:

"There are more and more endings: The 6th, the 53rd, the 131st, the 9453th, ending, endings going faster and faster, more and more endings, faster and faster until this book is having 186,000 endings per second."

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Some people won't like something just because they don't understand it. I do not always understand Brautigan. It doesn't bother me. I still and probably always will like Richard Brautigan despite the aforementioned and Brautigan's irregular writing output.

I thought this paper ended in the last paragraph! Oh, well:

186,000 endings per second!!!

Annie Hall: Reviewed by Maxine Palcis

May 8, 1978

Dear Woody Allen:

I've never seen any of your movies before, but a[illegible] seeing Annie Hall. I've vowed that I'll make a point of seeing all of your [illegible] movies and [illegible] old ones that will appearon television. You are not just a pretty face with a fantastic body, but a man with a very creative mind. I enjoyed Annie Hall and am impressed with your imagination. If indeed this movie is autobiographical, I feel sorry for your sadness and your paranoia, although I find your Jewish paranoia amusing. I enjoyed the way you often stepped out of character, or were you actually stepping into character? (I get confused easily), to tell the audience about the situation or to explain your version of the story. Having read The Pumphouse Gang recently, I knew who Marshall McLukan was when you introduced him to the nerd behind you in line at the theater. I also understand your feelings about going into a movie after it starts. It's not the same to see the beginning after you've seen the rest of the movie. When one of Annie's bodies got out of bed when you began making love with her, I really understood what you were conveying to the audience. She didn't want to disappoint you and yet her "psyche" wasn't interested or into making love. I understood your need to make love with an un-high or sober woman too. It's most honest when sober lovemaking can produce a natural high.

I guess I also feel sad for you because you don't seem to fit comfortably into our society. Like many geniuses in history, you are different and don't fit into the typical mold. I also admire that quality too, but it tends to be lonely when you are atypical.

Another part that I enjoyed was when Max, Annie and you stepped into a childhood scene and talked about and analyzed the relatives. The terror in your eyes when Annie's brother drove you to the airport was real and hysterically funny too. When you were trying to unpark your car and hitting others, I enjoyed the "bumper car" flashback. The subtitles in the one scene were clever. I guess I often wonder what subtitles would be present when I talk to certain people.

The way you encourage Annie to improve herself and meet new people is so typical of all of us. We want our partners to change, and yet we are threatened, frightened, and often angry when they do change.

It must be fun to be writer, director, and actor in your own movie. You have all the power. I noticed when you ended with the play within the movie, you were able to make the actress say the words you wanted Annie to say to you.

I very much enjoyed this film.

Sincerely,

Maxine Palcis